

8-18-2000

Trends. Homosexual Politics and Security: The American Psychological Association (APA) Brief of Amicus Curiae No. 99-699

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Recommended Citation

Editor (2000) "Trends. Homosexual Politics and Security: The American Psychological Association (APA) Brief of Amicus Curiae No. 99-699," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 6 , Article 4. Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol9/iss6/4>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. Homosexual Politics and Security: The American Psychological Association (APA) Brief of Amicus Curiae No. 99-699

Author: Editor

Volume: 9

Issue: 6

Date: 2000-08-18

Keywords: Homosexuality, Research Bias, Security

APA submitted a brief of amicus curiae to provide a context for the Supreme Court of the United States to review whether the policy of the Boy Scouts of America and Monmouth Council, Boy Scouts of America, excluding gay youths and adults survives state law aimed at reducing prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals. The brief does an excellent job in citing and surveying research and professional decisions supporting the position that adult homosexuality per se does not adversely affect the children in their care or the care they provide. However, there are at least two problems with this research that often are not aired in public discourse.

First, a case can be made that much of the cited research has been carried out by ego-syntonic homosexuals and by people with an a priori ideology or belief system that homosexuality per se is not associated with noxious consequences. Writings on the philosophy, sociology, and politics of science suggest that such a priori characteristics may be associated with witting and/or unwitting biases concerning methodology, data collection and analysis, and publication decisions--the latter made by publishing house and journal gatekeepers who often share the same a priori characteristics. Here there is an unfortunate conflating of science and political advocacy and even a masking of the latter with the former.

Second, a scientific focus on homosexuality per se exhibits one of the biggest theoretical flaws of the scientific method--the isolation of selected human characteristics from their historical, socio-cultural, and political contexts. More plainly put, the nature of any human characteristic in isolation from such contexts is quite besides the point. What is the point is the nature of various intrapsychic and behavioral consequences--and their consequences--stemming from selected human characteristics within contexts. For all but inveterate homophobic individuals, this is the salient point of political contention and one not directly addressed by the cited research. Here it is interesting to note that some of the most exciting and radical epistemologists who have led the way in dissecting science's conceptual shortfalls vis-a-vis homosexuality are uniquely conservative in recognizing the very same shortfalls in their own work.

All of this has direct relevance to policymaking on homosexuality and security clearances and suitability for service in sensitive positions. It is not that homosexuality's political advocates are necessarily wrong in their conclusions. But they mirror behavior associated with constructs like identification with the aggressor in their means. And people of all sexual orientations--including those entrusted with security issues--suffer in the process. (See Amicus brief for the case of Boy Scouts of America and Monmouth Council, Boy Scouts of America v. James Dale presented by the American Psychological Association. (March 29, 2000). Supreme Court of the United States, No. 99-699; Herek, G.M. (1990). Gay people and government security clearances: A social science perspective. *American Psychologist*, 45, 1035-1042; Herek, G. M., Kimmel, D. C., Amaro, H., & Melton, G. B. (1991). Avoiding heterosexist bias in psychological research. *American Psychologist*, 46, 957-963; Liliequist, J. (1998). State policy, popular discourse, and the silence on homosexual acts in early modern Sweden. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 35, 15-52; Pratt, J. (1998). The rise and fall of homophobia and sexual psychopath legislation in postwar society. *Psychology, Public Policy, & Law*, 4, 25-49; Sexual policy and the military: A need for a primer on

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the birds and the bees. (December 17, 1999). IBPP, 7(22).) (Keywords: Homosexuality, Research Bias, Security.)